

PDC 19: Crater

Introduction to PDC Area

The Crater Planning District derives its name from a large crater left by an explosion during the siege of Petersburg in the Civil War. The planning district is composed of the counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Greensville, Prince George, Sussex and Surry; the cities of Colonial Heights, Emporia, Hopewell and Petersburg; and the towns of Claremont, Dendron, Jarratt, McKenney, Stony Creek, Surry, Wakefield and Waverly. Because Chesterfield County is also a member of the Richmond Regional Planning District (PD 15), for the purposes of the Virginia Outdoors Plan information on Chesterfield is included only in the PD 15.

Most of the recreational resources of the region are associated with developed areas near the major rivers and Lake Chesdin. Most of the shoreline is privately owned, however, there are limited opportunities for the general public to access the waters for recreational pursuits. The numerous Civil War battlefields, operated by the National Park Service, provide for dispersed picnicking and trail use in addition to their interpretive benefits. The Civil War Preservation Trust has acquired two sites in Dinwiddie County. These are the White Oak Road and Hatchers Run properties. These sites are available for public educational purposes. Fort Lee has numerous athletic facilities and areas that were designed for military personnel but afford area citizens some limited use.

Residents of the counties in the southern Crater Region have thousands of acres of corporate timberlands available for hunting and other dispersed recreational activities. The smaller Piedmont streams and reservoirs in Greensville County meet some of the resident demand for water-based or water-enhanced recreation. However, Buggs Island Lake, Lake Gaston and the tidal estuaries of southeastern Virginia attract many more users.

Special events in the region include the Bike/Walk Virginia event in Emporia, the Bateau Festival in Petersburg and biannual river cleanups along the Appomattox River sponsored by the Friends of the Lower Appomattox River.

Geographic characteristics

The Crater District encompasses an area of approximately 1,889 square miles. The district straddles the fall line, with the western sections of Dinwiddie and Greensville counties in the Piedmont Plateau, and the remaining areas in the Coastal Plain. Elevations range from 400 feet above sea level in the west to less than 100 feet in the east. Some low-lying areas contain large freshwater swamps.

The area's rivers have been important to its development. Petersburg, a river port since the 1700s, was settled at the point where the Appomattox River crossed the fall line. Hopewell is just downstream at the confluence of the James and Appomattox rivers. The Nottoway and Blackwater rivers originate within the district, while the Meherrin River traverses Greensville County in the southern portion of the region.

Interstate 95 is the principal highway in the Crater Planning District, connecting Richmond and points south to North Carolina. Interstate 85 originates in Petersburg and angles to the southwest through Dinwiddie County, eventually entering central North Carolina. Newly constructed Interstate 295 provides a circumferential route around the Richmond area, intersecting with I-95 in Prince George County, south of Petersburg. Arterial Routes 58 and 460 provide east-west links through the region. Route 58 passes through Greensville County and Emporia, paralleling the North Carolina state line. Route 460 crosses Dinwiddie County, passing through the Petersburg area and providing a principal business route for eastern communities in the region.

Demographics

During the 1990's, the region as a whole grew by about 6.9%. The region experienced a 2.9% population growth rate between 2000 and 2005. Future growth is anticipated to be steady, with the population in the region projected to increase 15.2% to 111,900 in 2020 from its 2000 population level of 97,102. The Crater District's northern localities are included in the Richmond-Petersburg Metropolitan Statistical Area, while the localities in the southern portion are among the more sparsely populated areas of the state. Chesterfield County has a dual membership in the Richmond Regional and Crater Planning Districts; however for purposes of this plan, Chesterfield information is described in Region 15.

The region continues to experience a rapid growth rate. In 2000, the region had a population of 167,100. By 2005, the population had increased to 170,400 an approximate 2% increase. For this same 5-year period, Sussex County is thought to have had a slight decline in population. Growth is anticipated to be moderate with the influx of military and civilian related jobs at Fort Lee attributing to a portion of the population change in the region. Between 2006 and 2011, Fort Lee is expecting an 83% growth rate to 15,000 persons. This will increase the recreational demands on post and within the region.

Demand/survey findings

Based on the results of the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* and the Outdoor Recreation Facilities Inventory, the Crater region has specific needs include:

- Playgrounds and picnicking areas close to home.
- Additional basketball, volleyball and tennis courts.
- Multipurpose fields for soccer, football, baseball and softball.
- Large tracts of land open for off road motorcycling and hunting.
- Hiking and backpacking trails.
- Camping facilities, especially those associated with water access.
- Water access sites for fishing, swimming and boating.
- Facilities for nature study.

As localities plan for the future to meet the outdoor recreational needs of their residents they are encouraged to include small neighborhood parks, larger regional facilities and trails linking communities and water access points. The 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey VOP Draft – PDC 19: Crater

indicates a need for additional active recreation facilities, especially basketball courts, multipurpose fields for soccer and football as well as baseball and softball fields. The Crater region remains an area with interests in recreational activities such as hunting and off road motorcycling that require a large land base. Water related access for fishing, swimming, boating, canoeing and kayaking. Trails, blueways and greenways linking existing recreational, historic, cultural and natural resources could increase the number of miles of trails suitable for walking, bicycling and boating. Additional equestrian and off road vehicles are also needed. Linkages between historical, scenic and cultural resources are supported by survey results that indicate that visiting historic sites is second in popularity to walking for pleasure.

Outdoor Recreation

- State and regional agencies should place a high priority on providing recreation opportunities to the Commonwealth's urban population in "close-to home" settings to allow for better access and to avoid overuse of facilities planned for rural populations.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.
- Activity user groups along with local parks and recreation departments should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others to minimize user conflicts and increase economic and natural resource sustainability.
- Local, state and federal government should provide the appropriate number and venue of opportunities for the Commonwealth's population to enjoy and access outdoor environments.
- State and local DCR and local parks and recreation departments should provide opportunities to learn responsible use of public lands through the teaching of *Leave No Trace* and *Tread Lightly!* Skills.
- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should promote management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.

Land Conservation

The land conservation maps for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands: split by state and federal management agencies

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- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms. (See Chapter III. Land Conservation)

Specific land conservation recommendations for Crater include:

- Address the need for local and regional programs to promote conservation and the connection of conservation lands for wildlife and water quality.

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Land Trusts Operating in the PDC

Virginia Outdoors Foundation
 Chesapeake Bay Foundation
 James River Association
 The Nature Conservancy
 APVA Preservation Virginia
 Land Trust of Virginia
 The 500-Year Forest Foundation

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General recommendation for land conservation include:

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in chapter III. Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.

Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.

Green Infrastructure

The following are regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning presented in Chapter IV.

- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through planning tools.
- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green infrastructure-planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.
- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and sought.

Watersheds

The Crater region watersheds include the Chowan basin flowing south into North Carolina and the James River flowing east into the Chesapeake Bay.

- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

[A list of watershed organizations active in the region to be added.]

Programs

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation. The program areas include: Trails and Greenways, Blueways and Water Access, Historic and Landscape Resources, Scenic Resources, Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways, Scenic Rivers, Watersheds and Environmental and Land Stewardship Education.

Trails and Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian

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plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

General recommendations for trails include:

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.
- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.

Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross-jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. Trunkline trails existing or underway in Virginia include:

1. The East Coast Greenway, proposed to span almost 3000 miles from Maine to Florida, aims to connect all the major cities of the East Coast along a continuous, off-road path. This trail will make use of waterfront esplanades, canal paths, railroad corridors and park paths for cyclists, hikers, skaters, equestrians and people with disabilities as it connects urban, suburban and rural America. The East Coast Greenway Trail corridor could go through Dinwiddie County, and/or the Cities of Petersburg and Colonial Heights.

2. The **Trans-Virginia Southern Trail** will stretch from the Cumberland Plateau to the Chesapeake Bay. Comprised of many trails existing or underway, this network will connect the mountains to the sea and stimulate ecotourism across Southern Virginia. This multi- purpose, non-motorized, cross-country trail corridor crosses through Sussex and Greensville Counties using the abandoned Norfolk-Southern's Virginia Central railroad corridor and the Lake Gaston-Virginia Beach Water Pipeline corridor.

The following are specific regional trail/greenway proposals for this region:

3. "**Trekking Dinwiddie**" **Trail or the Dinwiddie County Battlefield Trails** are a trail system focusing on the natural and cultural resources in the northeastern portion of the County. The trail is proposed to link the county's recreational resources, Civil War battlefields and other historic sites.

4. Implement recommendations for **the Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway** and research cooperative regional management and operations alternatives for this resource that traverses over 400 acres in five jurisdictions. This water trail and greenway is a regional trail system along the river. When completed, the system will consist of bicycle and multi-purpose trails, linking natural, cultural, heritage and other linear open spaces in the region between Lake Chesdin and the City Point area in Hopewell. The goal of this 22-mile trail network is to link all recreational, cultural and natural features, and historic sites on both sides of the Appomattox River. A critical component of the Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway is the Virginia Dominion Power Canal and the Petersburg waterfront.

5. The **Appomattox River Heritage Trail** in Petersburg including a 2-mile pedestrian trail from the historic train station along the Appomattox River in Petersburg. Otherwise Petersburg's waterfront should be evaluated and reopened to accommodate recreational use including boating. The south channel of the river was closed years ago to reduce flooding, but could be reopened with control structures to provide the critical link in the greenway/water trail. Also included in the Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway are the pedestrian and wayside exhibits associated with the **National Park Service's Grants Headquarters at City Point** in Hopewell. This site serves as a gateway to the trail and terminus at the confluence of the James and Appomattox Rivers. There is an opportunity to connect the 300-acre **Lee Park** to the Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway along stream corridors and Petersburg's city streets.

6. The **Cabin Creek Trail** network in the City of Hopewell will connect several parks and recreational facilities. Hopewell High School, Mathis Park, Crystal Lake Park, Atwater Park and the new Atwater Soccer Complex. Approximately 5,298 feet of the Cabin Creek Trail has been completed and there are possibilities to connect this trail with the Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway.

7. The abandoned **Seaboard Coast Railroad** corridor between Petersburg and North Carolina has been considered for a potential rail-trail conversion for several years. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation is considering a rapid rail transit line in this corridor. If the rapid rail transit proposal goes forward, the rail-trail conversion

opportunity will be lost. Conversely, if other transit options are selected, the rail-trail conversion should be pursued. This potentially could become the route for the proposed East Coast Greenway.

Blueways & Water Access

Water Trail Recommendations

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.
- Areas that have adequate access and recreational seasonal flow levels should become numbered recommendations.

8. Incorporate the **Captain John Smith Adventures on the James Trail** and the National Park Service's proposed **John Smith National Historic Trail**, should it be authorized, in local comprehensive plans as a way to further heritage and ecotourism in the region. In the Crater region, the Oyster Loop includes sites at Smith's Fort Plantation, Chippokes Plantation State Park, Hog Island Wildlife Management Area and Fort Huger.

General water access recommendations include:

- Provide an additional 49 water access points in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia to meet the commitments of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.
- Water Identify and increase water access opportunities to Virginia's southern rivers.

Specific water access recommendations for public water access include:

9. Increase **water access** for the public on **the James, Appomattox, Blackwater, Meherrin and Nottoway Rivers**.

10. Secure an agreement or legal tool to ensure permanent public access and trails along the Appomattox River at the **Copeland Elementary School** in the City of Hopewell.

11. Participate with the James River Advisory Council and other partners in pursuing a **landscape and river corridor management plan for the James River** through the region that extends from the City of Richmond to Prince George County.

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Historic and Landscape Resources

The Civil War Preservation Trust actually owns portions of four battlefields in the Crater region including Reams Station, Peeble Farm, Hatchers Run and White Oak located in Dinwiddie County.

General recommendations for historic and landscape resources include:

- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.
- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.
- Capitalize on the region's historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources to increase regional tourism opportunities.
- Include the rural farmed landscapes and forest tracts in a visual assessment of the region and develop strategies to conserve these important scenic resources.

Scenic Resources Recommendations

- Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.
- Scenic corridors in the Crater region are located along the rivers, battlefield and incorporate the rural landscapes and historic districts. Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.
- Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.

Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical to of attractive and welcoming communities. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection. Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural

resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter VII. Following are general and specific recommendations for scenic roads:

- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.

There has been a tremendous interest in thematic trails including three Civil War driving tours programs: Lee vs. Grant, Lee's Retreat, and the Wilson-Kautz Raid. In addition other thematic driving tours in the Crater region include the James River Plantations Driving Tour Captain John Smith's Adventures on the James and the Wildlife and Birding Trail Tour.

Existing Virginia Byways in the Crater region include:

State Routes 708 and 627 in northern Dinwiddie County.

State Route 35 in Sussex County.

The following roads have been recommended for consideration as Virginia Byways:

12. Routes 10 and 156 in Prince George and Surry counties from Hopewell to the Surry County/Isle of Wight County line.

13. Route 35 in Sussex County from the Southampton County line to Route 301.

14. Route 40 in Sussex and Surry counties from Route 301 to Route 10.

Scenic Rivers

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia's Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, bio-diversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. River resources are a critical component for natural resource planning. In the Crater PDC there are currently 3 designated scenic river segments. Forty miles of the Nottoway River in Sussex and Southampton counties, between Route 40 at Stony Creek and Route 633 at Carey's Bridge, is designated as Virginia Scenic River. A segment of the Appomattox River, from below the Lake Chesdin Dam to the Route 36 Bridge in the City of Petersburg, has also been recognized as a state scenic river. A portion of the James River, upstream of Trees Point to Lawnes Creek in James City County (Region 23) and Surry County, is a designated State Historic River.

In order to more successfully protect river resources the following general and specific recommendations are given.

- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.

The following river segments have been evaluated and found to qualify for inclusion into the Virginia Scenic River Program:

15. The Nottoway River from Route 609 to Route 630.

16. The James River between Hopewell and the Surry County/Prince George County line. The reach in Surry County was designated a Historic River by the 1988 General Assembly.

The following river segments are recommended for evaluation to determine suitability for inclusion into the Virginia Scenic River Program:

17. The Meherrin River in Greensville and Southampton Counties.

18. The Blackwater River from the headwaters to Zuni.

19. The Nottoway River at the Brunswick/Dinwiddie line to Route 609.

20. The Nottoway River from Route 40 at Stony Creek to Route 653 at Carey's Bridge.

Watershed Resources

State what river watershed the PDC is in. (

List of local watershed groups will be included in a later draft)

General watershed recommendation:

Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations

Outdoor Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.

Federal, state, regional and local agencies will provide citizens access to stewardship education and conservation resources.

Federal, state, regional and local agencies will promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences and their relationship to environmentally literate citizenry.

Federal Facilities

The Base Realignment and Closure station impacts on Fort Lee increase the numbers of personnel housed on Post as well as off Post. The daily average of students training at Fort Lee will increase by 184% from 3,431 to 9,739. An additional 1,716 permanent military personnel are expected at Fort Lee by 2009. The current permanent military is 3,292. In addition 8,336 family members will accompany the permanent military up from 4,954 to 8,336. This military population in addition to the contractor support and civilian permanent employees will bring the total increase in employment at Fort Lee to 29,802 or approximately 15,000 additional persons by 2009. This increase in population will impact recreational resources and the demand for a diversity of recreational resources in the region.

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National Parks

Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites, as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox, and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks, and communities.

- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.
- Continue collaborative efforts through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Program to connect people to heritage, outdoor recreation, and educational opportunities and resources.

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Chesapeake Bay Gateways

The National Park Service coordinates the Chesapeake Bay Gateway Program (link: <http://www.baygateways.net>) to promote a historic and environmental focus on water access. The only designated Chesapeake Bay Gateway in the Crater Planning District is the Lower James River Water Trail.

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21. The Petersburg National Battlefield is a nationally recognized regional historical attraction. It includes the Eastern and Western Front portions of the battlefield, Poplar Grove National Cemetery, the new Home Front unit in Old Town Petersburg, Grants Headquarters at City Point, and Five Forks battlefield in Dinwiddie County. A new General Management Plan has been completed for the battlefield which providing management direction for the next 15-20 years and includes an ambitious 7,238-acre expansion to the park boundary. The National Park Service and the localities throughout the region should work together to provide additional trail opportunities within Petersburg National Battlefield and link them to the Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway and to privately owned Civil War sites.

22. Grants Headquarters at City Point is a unit of Petersburg National Battlefield in the City of Hopewell. The site was the debarkation point for men and materials during the siege of Petersburg and Grant's logistical base of operations. The Eppes dwelling, known as "Appomattox" was an early plantation dating back to 1763. General Grant, General-in-Chief of all Union armies, commanded the various armies from a log cabin located on the front lawn. Additional interpretation and environmental education already add to the desirability of this important tourist destination. The park's General Management Plan suggests providing water-to-land access on the river at the City Point unit. This is especially important since this area serves as the terminus and gateway for the Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway.

National Wildlife Refuges & Fish Hatcheries

23. The USFWS manages the **James River National Wildlife Refuge** in Prince George County. James River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is one of four refuges that comprise the Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The Refuge encompasses 4,200 acres of forest and wetland habitats along the James River, bordered by Powells Creek to the west, and the historic Flowerdew Hundred Plantation to the east. Located in Prince George County, Virginia, the refuge is 8 miles southeast of the City of Hopewell and thirty miles southeast of the City of Richmond.

The Refuge was created in 1991 to protect nesting and roosting habitat for the threatened American bald eagle. A secondary objective is to provide an opportunity to view wildlife in its natural environment, so that the public may better appreciate the refuge's role in conservation of wildlife resources. The James River National Wildlife Refuge has been selected to be put into Preservation Status” due to decreased funding for manpower and projects. Details of preservation strategies are being developed for this refuge.

State Facilities

State Parks

The approval of the 2002 General Obligation Bond referendum resulted in funds that benefit the entire state park system. Funds were allocated for new state park acquisitions and for the acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parks, thus providing continued protection of dwindling open space. The bond also provided funding for numerous new facilities, improvements to existing facilities and trails, and for the development of new trails.

In accordance with Code Section 10.1-200.1 - State park master planning, master plans must be developed for new state parks prior to the implementation of any new development. Existing master plans are to be re-evaluated every five years. The master planning process requires public involvement. An advisory committee, comprised of local officials, representatives from various user groups, businesses, tourism, adjacent landowners, and others who are stakeholders in the site, convenes to participate throughout the master planning process. Public meetings are held to gain public input in addition to the presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation, also open to the public. Any significant change to a state park master plan or park additions in excess of \$500,000 requires public input.

State parks are listed on the Wildlife and Birding Trail. Numerous park sites participate in regional and local initiatives such as trail development and programming.

24. Chippokes Plantation State Park/Chippokes Farm and Forestry Center

Chippokes Plantation State Park (1,946 acres) is one of the oldest working farms in the United States. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1969, Chippokes is a living historical exhibit located in a rural agricultural area along the James River in Surry County. In addition, the park has a wide variety of park offerings, including a swimming

complex, visitor center, picnic facilities, conference center with kitchen, 43 site campground, 3 colonial style rental cabins, and hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. The formal gardens surrounding the Chippokes Mansion are accented by azaleas, crepe myrtle, boxwood and seasonal flowers. Mansion tours are offered routinely and in association with special events.

Unique within the state park system, Chippokes Plantation State Park is managed cooperatively with the Chippokes Plantation Farm Foundation, which was created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1977 to establish, administer and maintain the model farm. The Foundation operates the Farm and Forestry Museum and oversees the farm operation on approximately 470 acres of crop and pasture on the park. Cooperative programs and special events are offered at the Farm and Forestry Museum and on the grounds of the Mansion.

Through funding from the 2002 GOB, the pool concession has been renovated, the campground expanded, and historic structures near the mansion have been renovated. The park was able to acquire Walnut Valley Farm adjacent to the original historic section of the park. The maintenance area has been relocated to the new acquisition, as part of the renovation of the historic structures. This creates new educational opportunities for interpreting the cultural features of this historic site.

Chippokes is located on the Captain John Smith Adventures on the James Trail and the James River Plantations Driving Tour *[need to verify this – should be]*. The park is also a participant in the Chesapeake Bay Gateway Program. Other cooperative regional opportunities include the re-establishment of the Old Chipoax Road as a multiuse trail, a 3.5 mile road trace, which runs from the James River through the park and continues to historic Bacon's Castle.

State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas (Specific recommendations for WMA not available at this time)

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should continue to develop trail systems within wildlife management areas to facilitate access for nature study, birdwatching, hunting and fishing.

Hog Island Wildlife Management Area included 3,908 acres located on three tracts of land in Surry County. Close to sea level in elevation, the Hog Island Tract is a mixture of flat, open land and pine forest interspersed with tidal marshes and controlled ponds. Intensive wildlife management on this tract includes a vast dike system to create impoundments that are seasonally drained and flooded to produce native plant foods for wintering waterfowl. Surrounding fields provide an additional food source in the form of annual agricultural crops. Hunting with a gun on the Hog Island Tract is allowed for waterfowl only on a strictly controlled basis. Deer hunting with a bow on the Hog Island Tract is allowed during the special archery season. Fishing on the management area is allowed in designated areas. Springtime at Hog Island produces excellent bow fishing action for carp. Excellent fishing for channel and blue catfish, and striped bass is found at the mouth of the Virginia Power station's warm water canal, located near the entrance

to the Hog Island Tract. For those wishing to fish the James River from a boat, there is a ramp on the management area at Lawnes Creek. Several miles of pedestrian trails are available, and the area has potential for picnic area development and includes some good, natural beach.

State Forests

General state forest recommendations include:

- DOF will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.
- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should work with DOF to demonstrate the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

Specific recommendations for state forests in the Crater region include:

25. Establish a **state forest in Sussex County** with opportunities for public access to outdoor recreation. The Nature Conservancy has secured large tracts from International Paper in the vicinity of the Piney Grove Natural Preserve. The Department of Forestry intends to acquire this property as a state forest.

Natural Areas (Need to be updated)

Chub Sandhill Natural Area Preserve and **Dendron Swamp Natural Area Preserve** are both located in Sussex County. These sites could offer some limited opportunities for compatible forms of recreational use such as hiking trails and bird watching.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has, as of March 2001, documented 591 occurrences of 182 rare species and natural communities in the Crater Planning District. Eighteen species are globally rare and six are federally threatened or endangered. Ninety-six conservation sites have been identified in the district; only 24 (25%) have received any level of protection through ownership or management by state, federal and non-government organizations.

DCR recommends that the 72 unprotected conservation sites be targeted for future protection efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state natural area preserve.

Natural Heritage Program Conservation Priorities for the Crater Planning District include:

26. Establish a natural area preserve in Prince George County to restore pine flatwoods and coastal plain depression pond communities.

27. Continue efforts to secure buffer lands around Fort Pickett.

Transportation

Virginia is home to more of the United States Numbered Bicycle Route system than any other state. Since both USBR 1 and USBR 76 cross the state, Virginia hosts about 41 percent of the total USBR system. USBR 1 crosses the state north-south from Arlington to the North Carolina border near Kerr Reservoir, and USBR 76 crosses east-west from Yorktown to the Kentucky border in Dickenson County. These federal routes are officially recognized by AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. These routes are shown on VDOT's official County Maps, and signed in the field.

In addition, Virginia also hosts parts of three other long-distance bicycle routes recognized by Adventure Cycling Association, which is dedicated to establishing a national system of long-distance routes. The Trans-America Bicycle Trail crosses the country from Oregon to Virginia, and shares the same alignment as USBR 76 in Virginia. The Maine to Virginia Bicycle Route runs approximately 150 miles from Washington, D.C. to Virginia, generally along the same alignment as USBR 1, and the Virginia to Florida Bicycle Route covers 130 miles from Richmond to the North Carolina state line at Suffolk.

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. (www.vtrans.org)
- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.

Specific recommendations for the Crater region related to transportation include:

28. Support a regional bike/trail plan to include alternative transportation initiatives linking heritage tourism. Work to have a bike/trail plan adopted as part of each localities comprehensive plan.

29. Support the Tri-Cities bikeway improvements.

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Other State Facilities (Colleges, Universities, Estuarine Research Reserves)

The following state-owned properties contain significant undeveloped land that may have potential for recreational use. Each site should be assessed, and cooperative use agreements developed where appropriate.

30. Richard Bland College in Dinwiddie County contains almost 700 acres. About 20% of the property has been developed. Additional dorms are planned for on site housing. The college and surrounding communities should partner to develop recreational opportunities as well as environmental outreach education for area citizens.

Local Parks and Recreation Departments

A significant void in parks and recreation departments exists in the Crater region. Greenville, Southampton and Sussex Counties as well as the City of Emporia do not employ a full-time parks and recreation director. These localities have turned any recreation programming over to private service providers. While private organizations may provide recreation programming in the short term, they are not charged with planning for the long term recreation, park and open space needs of a community. With populations anticipated to increase in each of these counties, this is a troubling trend. According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures, Year Ended June 30, 2005, per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: Prince; Petersburg, \$57.09; Colonial Heights \$77.64; and Hopewell, \$75.97. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31, including \$85.51 from Towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending on parks and recreation from Cities in Virginia.

General recommendations for local and regional parks and recreation include:

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs. This is most important in localities where no parks and recreation department exists.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.

- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.
- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.
- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores.
http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks

Specific recommendations for regional parks in the Crater region include:

31. Appomattox Riverside Park, in the Ferndale area below Lake Chesdin in Dinwiddie County has been developed by the City of Petersburg. This facility should be expanded to provide a variety of recreational uses and ultimately should connect with the Petersburg waterfront via trails along the old canal towpath.

32. The Appomattox River Park located in Prince George County is under construction and will be completed by December 2008. The park will include walking trails, an educational center, comfort station, and a river observation deck that can be used for water monitoring and fishing. Opportunities to expand the trails and extend the property should be pursued in partnership with surrounding property owners.

33. Lee Park located in the City of Petersburg has an abundance of cultural and natural history as well as Wilcox Lake offering opportunities for an expanse of recreational venues to the region's population. This 300 acre-park offers both active recreation venues alongside nature study and wildlife corridor enhancement in the watershed. The connection of Lee Park to the Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway will improve connectivity of the region's natural resources and pedestrian trail linkages.

34. Prince George County should develop a regional park along the James River in the historic plantation area to provide both land and water-based recreational facilities.

35. Surry County should take advantage of the beautiful natural setting of forest, water and marsh along the James River near the Town of Claremont to provide water accesses and water-related recreational opportunities.

36. The Nottoway River and its environs in Sussex County offer an ideal location for various woodland and water-oriented recreational activities.

37. The acquisition of the **Slagle Lake** property would be a major contribution to the recreational resources of the region due to its historical significance and proximity to the City of Emporia.

Private Sector Recommendations

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. Familiarity with the *Landowner Liability Law, Code of Virginia, Chapter 29.1-509* could encourage some landowners to enter into an agreement with a unit of government to provide public access while minimizing their liability. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs.

The following general recommendations are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to make existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation, especially where applicable to trails and greenways development, knowledgeable about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law.
- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.

The Crater Region contains a wealth of significant cultural and historic resources. The major rivers are capable of supporting thousands of activity days of water-based recreational use. The 2000 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* pointed out that the people of the region want additional opportunities for water-based recreational facilities. Private developments could provide access points for the major streams. The survey also revealed that visiting historic sites and gardens is important to area residents. The private sector can play a major role in making the numerous historic sites available for local residents and visitors. Camping is another unmet recreational need the private sector could support. The unique combination of water resources and important historic and

cultural areas translate to opportunities for the private sector to provide support facilities and increase recreational developments to meet the existing and future demand of residents and visitors. There is also an unmet need for four-wheel-drive, off-road trail opportunities in the region. This may present an opportunity for the private sector to use lands for recreational trails that may not be productive for other uses.

38. Pamplin Historical Park is a privately owned attraction in Dinwiddie County. The park has 422 acres and features a museum, plantation, theater and a Civil War battlefield. In the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier, visitors are immersed in an entertaining personal encounter of the story of the common soldier of the Civil War. Tudor Hall is a restored and furnished 1812 plantation house that served as a Confederate Brigade headquarters during the 1864-65 Petersburg Campaign. The Battlefield Theater features a fiber optics map, artifacts and a surround-sound theater presentation describing the August 2, 1865 breakthrough battle. Regional trails could be linked to this park to enhance connectivity of cultural resources.